

Report

Cabinet

Part 1

Date: 11 November 2020

Subject **Audit Wales – Audit of Newport City Council’s 2020-21 Improvement Plan (Certificate of Compliance)**

Purpose To present Cabinet with the Audit Wales first Assessment of Performance Certificate on the 2020/21 Improvement Plan. The certificate confirmed that the Council has discharged its duties under section 15(6) to (9) of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

Author Head of People and Business Change

Ward All

Summary As part of the programme of regulatory activity in accordance with the Local Government Measure 2009, the Auditor General is required to issue two Certificates of Compliance to demonstrate that Council is discharging its duties under the Measure. This is the first certificate following the publication of the Council’s objectives on 24th June 2020 and a review of Well-being Objectives 19/20 in October 2020.

Proposal Cabinet is requested to note the positive outcome of the Certificate of Compliance in relation to meeting its statutory duty under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

Action by Cabinet

Timetable Immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Corporate Management Team
- Audit Wales

Signed

Background

As part of the programme of regulatory activity in accordance with the Local Government Measure 2009, the Auditor General is required to issue two Certificates of Compliance to demonstrate that Council is discharging its duties under the Measure.

As part of the first certificate of compliance, the Council is required to publish its Improvement Plan in accordance with section 17 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. In June Newport Council published its Strategic Recovery Aims and also re-confirmed its position to deliver its four Well-being Objectives set in the Corporate Plan 2017-22 for the 2020/21 financial year.

As a result of this action completed by the Council, Audit Wales published its first Certificate of Compliance (Appendix 1), with the Auditor General for Wales certifying that:

I certify that, following publication on 24 June 2020, I have audited Newport City Council's Improvement Plan in accordance with section 17 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (the Measure) and my Code of Audit Practice.

As a result of my audit, I believe that the Council has discharged its duties under section 15(6) to (9) of the Measure and has acted in accordance with Welsh Government guidance sufficiently to discharge its duties.

Certificate

The certificate is attached as Appendix A (English) and Appendix B (Welsh) to this report.

Financial Summary

There are no direct financial impacts in relation to this report. Where proposals for improvement have been made in individual Audit Wales reports these will be actioned through business as usual activities by the Council.

Risks

There are no direct impacts of this report to the risks identified in the Council's Corporate Risk Register.

Links to Council Policies and Priorities

Continuous improvement is central to the Council's ambitions for itself, organisationally, and in terms of its role in advancing the City's reputation and the quality of life for its citizens. A range of core priorities and programmes are influenced by this agenda, including:

- Newport Public Services Board 'One Newport' Well-being Plan.
- The Corporate Plan 2017-22
- Annual reporting arrangements

Options Available and considered

Cabinet are asked to:

- (a) Consider and accept the conclusion contained in the Auditor General's Certificate of Compliance Report; or
- (b) Disregard the findings of the report.

Preferred Option and Why

The preferred option is (a) as the Certificate of Compliance is positive and confirms that the council has discharged its duties under the Local Government Measure 2009 with regards to Improvement Planning.

Comments of Chief Financial Officer

There is no financial impact in presenting the Audit Wales Certificate to Cabinet. Any improvement actions included within the Corporate Plan are reported as part of the on-going medium term financial planning and budget monitoring processes and in that respect, clear responsibility and accountability for delivering the projects and managing resources is key.

Comments of Monitoring Officer

There are no specific legal issues arising from the Report. The Council has a duty under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (“the Measure”) to secure continuous improvement in the delivery of services and to publish an assessment of its performance. The Assessment of Performance Certificate issued by the Audit Wales confirms that the Council has discharged its duties in accordance with section 15 of the Measure guidance.

Comments of Head of People and Business Change

The certificate verifies that the Council has met its obligation of demonstrating continuous improvement under the Local Government Measure 2009. This is an on-going aim for the council and this also contributes to the Council’s adherence to the Sustainable Development Principle of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. There are no direct staffing implications contained in this report.

Comments of Cabinet Member

The Leader of the Council is briefed on all aspects of performance monitoring and management within the Council and related Audit Wales monitoring work.

Local issues

Not Applicable

Scrutiny Committees

Scrutiny Committees receive information on Audit Wales review outcomes as appropriate to the Committee responsibilities, and also received and commented on the Annual Report.

Equalities Impact Assessment and the Equalities Act 2010

Not Applicable

Children and Families (Wales) Measure

Not Applicable

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Auditor General helps to ensure that public bodies are held to account for their performance in relation to the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Local Government Measure (2009). Audit Wales consider the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 in the planning and implementation of their work. The issue of the Certificate of Compliance demonstrates that the council is meeting its obligations under both Acts.

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

Section 17(1) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 imposes a duty on the Local Authority to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area.

Consultation

Not Applicable

Background Papers

Newport City Council’s Corporate Plan 2017-22
Audit Wales Assessment of Performance Certificate
Audit Wales Assessment of Performance Certificate (Welsh)
Annual Report 2019/20

Dated: November 2020